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Media Release

Friday, June 15, 2007

Department of Justice and county police team up against elder abuse

Suspect arrested in "Sweetheart Scam" for bilking 85-year-old man out of more than \$27,000

In a joint investigation between the Delaware Department of Justice Fraud Division and the New Castle County Police, investigators have arrested Gina Mitchell, 30, of 301 Collins Drive, Springfield, PA on a charge of felony theft from a victim over 62 years of age.

Mitchell, in what investigators describe as a "sweetheart scam," approached and befriended an 85-year-old North Wilmington resident as he was leaving a store in the Silverside Road area of New Castle County in January 2007. After several weeks of lunches and conversations she asked the victim for \$25,000, claiming that she needed the money to buy a property in Baltimore, MD. Mitchell tricked the senior into giving her the money in February 2007. A short time later she asked the victim for an additional \$8,000 to repair the roof of the building, and the victim provided her with another \$2,300.

Mitchell was arrested in the Rocky Run Shopping Center in New Castle County on June 13, 2007 as she was preparing to meet the victim. She was also arrested on an outstanding Superior Court warrant for an unrelated fraud charge in which she bilked another victim out of more than \$9,000 in a psychic scam investigated by the Delaware State Police.

Mitchell, who has addresses in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Texas, was arrested and convicted in Texas for running a similar "sweetheart scam" in 1999. In that scheme, she and her associates, described as "travelers," swindled several male senior citizens out of approximately \$90,000.

Mitchell was arraigned and committed to the Women's Prison in lieu of \$20,000 secured bail on both theft charges. Subsequently, \$20,000 cash bail was posted and she was released.

The investigation is ongoing.

"Scam artists like Gina Mitchell who target seniors count on their victims to not report their crimes," said Attorney General Joseph R. Biden, III. "They rely on the silence of their victims in order to violate some of our most vulnerable community members. But through the cooperation of state and local law enforcement, we are giving seniors a voice in this fight."

Anyone who may have had contact with Gina Mitchell, shown below, is urged to contact Special Investigator Gary Tabor of the Delaware Department of Justice Fraud Division at (302) 577-8508.



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